CHURCH HISTORY

Chapter 37 – The Eastern and the Roman Church

1. *The Eastern Greek Orthodox Church*
    a. *The Church had its origin in the East, and the eastern Greek Orthodox branch is its oldest part. It has had a continuous and unbroken existence down to the present time. Yet to other Christians the Greek Orthodox Church is almost nonexistent.*
    b. *These Greek Orthodox Christians are to be found mostly in Turkey, Syria, Greece, the Balkan countries, and Russia.*
    c. *The eastern Greek Orthodox Church knows nothing of such a tremendous upheaval as the western Latin Church experienced in the Reformation. Its theology is that of the ecumenical councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Chalcedon, and Ephesus.*
    d. *For centuries the Greek Orthodox Church has held the eastern frontiers against Arab and Turkish Islam. It has been a mighty dam which has prevented the waters of Islam from flooding western Europe. Millions of Greek Orthodox Christians have lived for centuries under Muslim rule. Thousands upon thousands of these Christians have sealed their Christian faith with their blood. No other branch of the Church universal has given so many martyrs.*
    e. *Christianity in its Greek Orthodox form was introduced into Russia by missionaries from Constantinople. It was the state religion of Russia until the Revolution in 1917, when religion was declared to be an opium and a hindrance to progress.*
2. *The Roman Catholic Church*
    a. *Since the Council of Trent the Roman Church steadily pursued its course for almost four hundred years. Until very recently there had been little change in its traditional practices. There have been scattered conversions of Protestants to Catholicism and of Catholics to Protestantism. In Italy, Spain, and France thousands have left the Catholic Church, but they have not become Protestants. They have broken with the Church and religion in every form. They are the bitter enemies of all religion. A great many of them are Communists. Modernism has also made inroads into the Roman Church.*
    b. *In the seventeenth century Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres in the Southern Netherlands (now Belgium), was the leader of a dissenting movement called the Jansenists, but was heavily prosecuted by the Jesuits. A small church still exists today*
    c. *In 1773 Pope Clement XIV abolished the Order of Jesuits. The order was restored by Pope Pius VII in 1814. From that time down to the present the Jesuits have been the power behind the papal throne. Under the influence of the Jesuits, the Vatican Council of 1870 declared the infallibility of the pope. That is, it declared that the pope in all his official statements and decisions regarding the Church is free from error. Thereby the claims so insistently made in the fifteenth century, that general councils are supreme over the popes, were denied once and for all.*
    d. *Although the authority is seldom used, it was invoked in November, 1950, when Pope Pius XII, speaking ex cathedra, proclaimed the Assumption of Mary to be a Roman Catholic doctrine. This is to say that she, body and soul, was taken up to heaven.*
    e. *In spite of some statements of the Church to the contrary, it did in times past fail to encourage Bible reading. Several official pronouncements strictly forbid the use of the Scriptures to the layman. Now it is adopting a more lenient policy, and even at times urging Scripture reading, with the familiar restriction to the use of the Church's own version.*
    f. *What Protestants have found difficult to understand is the present Roman Catholic emphasis on ecumenicity at the same time that it announces new extra-Biblical doctrines such as the Assumption of Mary, which tend to widen the very breach it is seeking to bridge.*